

HB099 Revise proof of residency requirements for voter registration
House State Administration, RM 455
January 19, 2009 @ 3 PM
Secretary Linda McCulloch's Remarks

Good morning Mr. Chair, members of the committee.
For the record, I am Montana Secretary of State Linda McCulloch.

I am here today to respectfully oppose House Bill 99, an act revising proof of residency requirements for voter registration.

As the chief election official, it is my duty to make voting uncomplicated and accessible to a greater number of Montanans, while ensuring the accuracy of the state's election results.

To vote in Montana, you must be at least 18-years-old and a lawful and mentally sound citizen of the United States who has been living within our borders for a minimum of 30 days.

Registration is relatively quick and painless. You fill out a voter registration form, which is available in your phone book, online, and at a number of community locations, and turn it into your local election office.

Current law requires a Montana driver's license number. If you do not have a Montana driver's license, you must provide the last 4 digits of your social security number. If you have neither a Montana driver's license or a social security number, you may present any valid photo id, or a utility bill, bank statement, or other government document.

Current Montana law complies with the Help America Vote Act, or HAVA, by requiring verification of an applicant's identification before the applicant can be a legally registered voter. This process adequately prevents voter fraud.

My main point of contention regarding this bill proposal is that it seems to target college students, who in my opinion, have every right to choose whether to cast their vote in the town they grew up in and still consider their hometown OR in the town they currently live in and attend college--as long as they meet all the registration requirements.

In the 2008 general election, 18-24 year-olds represented nearly 10% of the total registered electors in Montana. More than 60% of these registered electors successfully filled in their ballots, contributing to the largest voter turnout in the nation since 1968.

We should not deny these students, or any voter who claims residency in Montana, their fundamental right to vote.

By law, when someone elects to vote in Montana, they choose to establish residency in Montana. Similarly, an election administrator shall cancel a person's voter registration upon being notified of said person's registry in another county or state.

I do not condone voter fraud, so I will also point out that if a student, or any other citizen of the United States, casts more than one ballot in an election, they are breaking the law. There are provisions in both federal and state laws that clearly define voter fraud as an illegal and punishable act.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, Montana has consistently had one of the highest voter turnout rates in the nation, and I am committed to continuing that remarkable tradition, and to ensuring that Montana elections remain honest and accurately reflect the will of the people.

HB99 does not comply with my goal to maintain well-run elections in the state of Montana, and therefore, I cannot support this bill.

Thank you for your time.